

M 1356

San Francisco

Groups I and II

February 17, 1968

I still think I ought to sit on a platform. Both running? Good!. Now, how do we begin? If course, I'm--I'm glad to see all of you. And I'll be here for a little period and I hope it will be strenuous. I think we ought to do a great deal. I think we can--there's no reason why we cannot. How to do it we will work out gradually. Certain things will come up, you know. This is a little bit of a (French word) and after Los Angeles. I don't have to go back there right away, but there is Eugene and Portland and Seattle. Where's Andy? Andy-- oh there you are. . . good! We still have to talk about it. When is the best time, Andy, to go up. Apparently there is something scheduled for the Tuesday. Did Ron explain it to you? Ron, will you tell him? And that might mean that I'll have to be here this coming Tuesday week and sometime during the later part of that week I think we'll go to Seattle. We'll drive, if that is alright with Andy. Andy, will that be--two weeks. . . . two weeks from today we'll probably be there on a Saturday and then we work our way back. Maybe we stop over in Eugene on the way up and in Portland on the way down. It depends a little bit on Portland. But it means that for the next two weeks you can plan to do your ordinary work and the third week maybe extraordinary--all right? Then we'll see if that fits. So then coming back--so now you can count on two weeks here. We'll continue with the regular schedule--no changes in that. I will relieve Ron a little bit and what happens here continues to happen here and what happens in Palo Alto or in Berkeley--perhaps we could combine those groups again on one day. Is that convenient for Palo Alto to meet on Tuesday altogether in Berkeley? Or is it better

that the first week all of Berkeley and Palo Alto were in Berkeley and the second week all of us--Berkeley and Palo Alto meet in Palo Alto? We will also have to consider an open meeting, but I would like to say something more about that. I already said a little bit about it before, but I don't. . . I don't believe in open meetings too much unless you can take care of them. I depend a bit on what kind of questions you will ask and I would like to have you consider I would say almost as if I weren't here; or that you behave in the same way as I can hear from tapes so that you don't cater to me, but that you will ask your question and discuss it as if you have a regular meeting for yourself together. It's always so difficult because whenever I come I put a certain damper on certain things and then your behavior becomes quite different. Maybe it improves, maybe it doesn't, but I do not know really what you are. You're never the same with me, you know, and I have a very definite idea of what you are that may be entirely different when you are with others. But maybe that cannot be helped--so, we came for a special purpose. We stopped over in Pittsburgh and Marjorie met me there, because I wanted to talk with her and work with her and gather impressions from the group in Pittsburgh and in Oseola and in Dallas and Albuquerque; when we stopped over we spent two days in Dallas and also two days in Albuquerque. There are tapes to prove it--Pittsburgh also; it's a new group; it will grow. There's a letter on my desk now; I haven't seen it yet, but it's a report of what's happening there at the present time and I think it will continue as a little group. Oseola, as you know, is rather small, but a few very interested people who are there and may be that will grow. Dallas, for one, is quite exceptional. It is a group, there's no

question about it. There may be few people, but they talk--really work. They are a little bit more mature, but they are serious, very honest and dare to talk to each other. If they wish they can argue, but always they keep in mind Work. And they bring it back to work. Albuquerque's a little different--also, very good group--many different types in that group--and because of that a great deal of discussion and on a good level, and actually wants to find out what is what. So, I was very glad--we actually have three tapes from those meetings there. Los Angeles is difficult--still in its infancy and there are, of course, different currents which operate there which do not operate as much in other places and, after all, Los Angeles is quite new. Frank Ripley will be there, coming up from San Diego, every once in a while and that, I think, is of great help. So that is the report so far and now we are here. And after we go a little further and then we talk about what we have done in San Francisco and Berkeley and so forth you can rest assured that when I get back to New York I'll have to give a report on our activities as they are at the present time. We'll have to talk together, John, about Big Sur to see that to do and at what time. So now, what has accumulated during this period? I would still like to say something more, though, and I would like to get it off my mind because there is something that is not entirely right and for which the group as a whole is responsible. And without forgetting difficulties that are in the way whenever certain things have to be done like physical work as you may not immediately know what is involved and things come up which you have not counted on and maybe account then afterwards for certain delays, I would say this, without criticizing I'm terribly

disappointed about not having any facilities upstairs. Now I can understand it and I know how difficult it is to put certain things in when you have already have a structure that partly has to be broken away, but you see, I think you waited a little too long. You tried to do it in the last week or so. Naturally, most of you are unskilled--you don't know enough about things--but I left quite some time ago and with the very definite understanding that certain things would be attended to and should be ready by the time I came back. Now I come back and what do I come back to? You see, I understand again and I want to say that--that there are delays and it is not questioning your real wish--because I'm sure it isn't that. It is there, but it is not sufficient. We talked a little bit about it on the trip coming up today and I half-jokingly said if it is not finished, which I would have liked, then those responsible for it will have to continue to work during the night until it is done, and I will be in the other room and they will be terribly afraid of waking me up because they may have to do hammering, but it may be much better for them really to understand what they do to me. And this is the point that refers to the group as a whole--and I ask you simply a question: Where do you place me? What is there in your mind when you think about me? Why do you think that I come? I'm an older man. I spend my time trying to hold together certain groups and the groups are growing. They require more work; it is more movement at the present time than separate groups, and I travel around, and I spend a great deal of energy trying to do this and that to the best of my knowledge. To a certain extent you can respect me for two reasons: One, because I'm older than any one of you, and the other is that I do represent

something which without me, I think, you would have great difficulty in getting. But that is neither here nor there because even if you disperse, it would be quite alright from the standpoint of eternity. But we are here now and you expect me and I come after spending days on the road and giving a little bit of a talk here and there--maybe tiring--maybe not so much. You can always say I enjoy it, but that's not your concern; your concern is how you look at me. What do you think of me? What kind of respect do you give me? And you don't think about that enough. Here I come. What is there for me to live here at this place. I want to stay here because this is the enter of Work and I want to be on hand and available for anyone who wishes--and you let me sleep in a place like that? It's not right. And you must understand that. You don't think enough--you're children. You don't take the responsibilities for wherever it is needed for yourself to take that responsibility. It happens to be me. I don't give a damn about comfort. I can sleep on the floor and it doesn't matter if I walk a mile to a toilet, but that's not your concern. I do what I think is right. You must know what is right for me and you don't consider it enough. I'm not questioning your kindness and the way sometimes you will look at me--and perhaps, even at times, a little grateful, because we talk about ideas that concern your life and, of course, I'm quite honest about it and sincere. But it does not mean that that is really penetrating sufficiently into you to know what do you really expect when I come. And do you ever realize how much it costs me to come? It would be quite easy for me to sit nicely, particularly now. We have a barn and in the neighborhood of New York--quite a lovely place--; it requires a great deal of attention and it is lovely for me to sit

there--just to sit and to have a few people attend to me and take care of me so that I can work, I can write, or I can answer some tapes. And I don't have to go through all the trouble of seeing that we get through snows in New Mexico and in Albuquerque, or in Arizona--even to some extent, maybe risk--take a risk to get there on time, because I promised--but you see, here I sit now and what do you know? Maybe postponed a few days because of some difficulties, but you come, there you come, you turn out and what do you want from me? Just a little satisfaction of curiosity? Or just to hear me talk a little bit? So that instead of a tape you hear me in person? Or you can get an impression? And why should I do it? What is there, or to say very crudely, what is there in it for me? And it always doesn't help to simply say, "Yes, we are working." Sometimes you know damn well you're not working at all. And you don't even take the responsibility for a simple thing in ordinary life--or even for a man who is older than you are--you don't have that kind of respect--to consider when he comes what does he find. It's not that I'm angry--don't misunderstand it--it is that you have not enough conscience to work with, and you don't consider, and very often, it's just consideration of your own--for yourself--in order to have a little bit more satisfaction, and every once in a while you go out of your way, but you don't think things through, and you don't really, you don't really know because you are not yet adjusted to that--that way of living--how to consider other people. And so for that reason I say when I come it will be concentrated work. I have no other interest whatsoever. I will work to exist with anyone and my judgment about people is about their sincerity regarding work. I don't care particularly about friendships; they're there naturally and you also know, I've said if before, I love people and maybe they love me to a certain extent. But for me the para-

mount question of every person's life with whom I'm in contact has to do with what do they wish to do regarding themselves to wake up and make honest and serious attempts to wake--to make attempts as work--as Gurdjieff describes it and as we try in our, maybe very feeble way to apply and see what could be the results for ourselves in this kind of work--and for that we have meetings and for that we have also some movements and for that we have some physical work together. So, I'm just warning you in the beginning--the level of work is going to be quite high and I will insist on it, and I will require from all of you who look up, that kind of sincerity and honest and no superficiality and not simply lip service. I wish all of you to be honest with yourself--and on that basis we will talk about work and we will try to explain whatever might not be clear and I want you to do at certain times, whenever I talk about certain tasks, not to just listen to them, but to apply them and to put them in practice in your life the way you consider something that is important to you if you actually want to give it all you can because something is at stake for yourself. Again, I say do not misunderstand if you think that this is fanaticism. There's no particular reason to talk about Gurdjieff unless you mean it, unless it has that kind of place in your life and respect for that and that is why I say a little bit about not having a respect for me and my coming, because where will you place respect for work if you don't have it for me. I'm so much lower and if you don't have it for me you never will have it for something that really requires all your attention. But enough as far as that is concerned. Each person who knows he is responsible and has been and also will find reasons for it. I will accept all the reasons you can offer. You can do

whatever you like from now on, but when it has to do with me you know what I require. The tapes for the meetings on the trip, everything that has happened, is available to you when you wish to listen to it. I brought some more material from New York--some transcriptions and we've talked to the proper people. Also I want to set up a real index. I brought some cards which can be Zeroxed also representing the work we've done in New York. We have to work together much more and there has to be much more interchange. And certain things have to be settled quite definitely. I will tell you a little bit about certain progress you might say that we have made in New York and, of course, I think you will be interested in it. Work has become a little bit too big; not only did we have to move from the little place where the fire was, but the new place is quite adaptable to sufficient numbers of people. But the groups now run between 80-90-100 people per evening. It's quite a number. Together with that we go out to the barn weekends, Saturdays, Sundays, sometimes both days regardless of how cold it is and we work there. Again, 30 people on an average so far. It will be more in the spring; then, of course, we will really go to town, because it's going to be a big year for them--and we will profit a great deal by what we are doing and we will use that kind of experience I hope a little later when, as far as I know and as far as I believe it is a necessity we will have to do the same thing here; even if you have a smaller group now it may be a little difficult as far as finances are concerned, but it is still time to plan now and already start doing what I suggested last time I was here--to form more or less, I wouldn't say committees because they usually don't do any work--

individuals--people who actually take a responsibility to go around scouting around different sections around San Francisco or Berkeley or Palo Alto--to see where is a suitable place where we could have something on the outside surrounding in the country where also work can take place and gradually I think the accent of activities could be gradually transferred to that kind of a place. We do it in New York now because I don't think, and you know this, I've said it before, I don't think that the atmosphere in the city is conducive and I believe there are difficulties which are going to happen in the cities like New York and also here in San Francisco and Los Angeles--and that to say simply it is a little safer to be more in the country. I would not like to see much of what we have started is going to be disturbed and will not continue after I die.

I think it is necessary to understand that on the part of you all, because that is an aim that I have and I believe the aim is right--to maintain work as it ought to be done, or ought to be understood, or as it is in exact language--so that each person will know what is the meaning of work on oneself. The groups in New York being a little too large and also facing this particular period when I am not there--I've asked several people to take charge. This time we have divided it up into pairs of people--that is, man and wife, or at least man and woman--so that they can work together and take responsibility, and there are now seven of such groups--totally 14 people who will be in charge--not that everybody will be there at the same time, but they will take the responsibility for a general meeting each week at which, of course, questions will be asked and answered, but also that those who feel competent

that they will start little groups on their own and that they then, in having such groups, will try to find out what they know themselves and then relieve then the pressure which may be on me every once in awhile. The reason for doing this is simply to divide this kind of responsibility during the time that I'm still alive, so that there is a possibility of also helping and that they can gradually learn to stand on their own feet. At the same time it is a good lesson for them because they will know then when they are confronted with becoming responsible for a smaller group that they find out how little they really know and if they want to limit themselves to actual experience that every once in a while they will be hard put to answer a question which comes from a person in all probability who would want to know an answer and is entitled to it. It is in the nature of an experiment you might say and we will see how it works, but there are now five of such groups already in existence and some of them will send tapes and I will listen to them, of course. It is an increase of work probably on my part, surely in the beginning. After a little while it will be a division of work and then all that is needed is correlation of such activities. We will do the same thing here, but not as yet on as large a scale. And I think that for the time being we will go very slow and to see who actually fills that place with a small group of people to start talking and explaining and adhering to work and relieve some of the pressure here on some of the people in this group or in Berkeley or Palo Alto. Who will do it, I don't know. I have to think about that quite honestly and to get an impression and it will depend a great deal on what my reactions will be towards what you are saying and doing and what I hear and what I can look at or at least what I can perceive of the activity of yourself. It will

have to go in that direction because otherwise we will miss many other opportunities which I think should be taken. The only objection that you can have towards it is that we might dilute efforts and that things would become superficial. That, of course, I would try to avoid and for that reason I will remain in contact with whatever happens so that at least we will remain honest in the expose' of any discussion of work. And if it isn't right, at least as far as I can see it, I will also not only take the trouble, but I'll be very happy and take the responsibility to try to correct the same way that we do now with different people who take the responsibilities for groups in other cities. It is also for this reason that they gain in doing this and in answering their tapes that they will find out every once in a while how difficult it is to remain honest, to stick to experiences personally, and to be able to separate that which is a personal opinion from that what is a personal experience. So this I have in mind during the time that we will be here, we will start such a thing. I would like to start in the beginning here in San Francisco to have a separate group for new people. While I'm here I will be in charge. Who will help I will let you know later, but it is the plan to be in contact with different currents which are now taking place here as well as in Los Angeles and, in general, on the West Coast, perhaps a little bit more than on the East--where sometimes the name of Gurdjieff is mentioned and misused, and that it is very necessary that there is a strong group taking a very definite stand regarding Gurdjieff's work--and so that there is no maybe about it and no wishy-washiness, or that it remains exact this way; again, I say in my opinion, Gurdjieff meant it. And there should be that kind of an adherence

and in directing this or organizing for this that we may be able to counteract certain influences and currents which now take place and which are not correct from the standpoint of objectivity or from the standpoint of what is really necessary for a human being to know. In that way I hope that you will help me. I got a few reports and I'm very glad about some of the people who are now operating here. We will go more in detail about that as we go along. You discussed it, I understood, I didn't listen to that tape, at one of the meetings about--ah--I won't go into any further detail about that; it doesn't matter. There are different groups of that kind here as well as in Los Angeles. I think we have to find out a little bit more about it and come to definite conclusions mutually. And also see what kind of direction a certain activity towards them could be--the reason why I say this is because I know that some of these people who start to talk, a la Gurdjieff, will also have in their audience every once in a while people who are not satisfied and cannot remain satisfied with the drivel that every once in a while is measured out to them. And being more in contact with it there will be the possibility of actually doing something for these who really want to know. It places on us a responsibility to wish to know and then actually to manifest that and again, not to be too theoretical and not to fall over-board, but to be actually in touch with that what is real with them. As Gurdjieff explains it in All and Everything and that that for us becomes for us more and more, you might call it, a Bible. Orage used to call it Scripture, which is the same term; it is a little bit broader, but it means the level of that kind of literature is extremely high and one of the

characteristics is that when you pick it up and read it again, you discover constantly something new. And you are all the time surprised that you have read certain things before which you didn't perhaps take in or maybe you didn't understand, and in reading it again and again you discover certain things which you have known should have existed but now exist for you because you are different in receiving them. I'm glad, of course, to be here tonight. I just wondered, you see. It might satisfy your curiosity actually to see that I'm here. What we will be able to do and what kind of questions you will have, you will not be prepared for it, because you see what I now wish to do when we meet again is really to sit and listen to your questions. I do not intend, and I will very definitely make an effort, to stay away from so-called lectures. There have been enough and if you don't remember them, there are tapes. And if you want to listen to that kind of thing you can have tapes to different people where it was necessary to give an exposé of a certain kind in the form of a lecture. But I said before that I want to work and I want to make the level of work high enough and strong enough and focus on that almost, you might say, to your own detriment, of giving up certain things so that you could concentrate and make this a concentrated effort as long as I'm here. And the only way that you will be able to do it is for all of you to ask to try to formulate for yourself what you want to know and that you ask questions which are questions which actually concern you about not being clear about what is meant or a description of your experience when you try to apply. And then you face an impossibility of not knowing what to do or perhaps you start to question that maybe you're on the wrong road. And that is why I want to finish this now, because I don't want to talk too

much. I've no desire anymore to repeat time and time again, even from a little bit different kind of a standpoint and sometimes with a little bit of a different in an example illustrating what I mean, which may be very nice and to some extent amusing, but to me it has become much too much a waste of time. There are ever a thousand tapes you can listen to. There's no need for me to keep on saying the same thing. And I don't really want to even if it may be amusing as I call it to you to listen once in a while to these things when you hear it rather than hearing it only on a tape. You're only entitled to that when you work. And I want your questions so that then maybe there can be an answer. And I assure you that if there are no questions there is no meeting. It depends on you, because I do not wish to give a talk. So, maybe to some extent your curiosity now is satisfied. You know I'm here, you know that I'm available, you know that we will work and you also know what I expect. And now it's up to you to see what you do with it and to what extent you want to utilize the time that I have to spend here for your own benefit and to see if after some time when I go back again you consider this a period profitable to you, to yourself, to your work, to your growth, to your understanding, to your progress on the road to becoming a man as he really should be and if you know theoretically well enough how to describe whatever you understand by harmonious man. And so for tonight we finish. Tomorrow we work here physically and for the rest of the week we'll see what we have to do more or less in the regular way as we have said already. The first meeting then being on Tuesday in Berkeley at which meeting I hope that all Palo Alto Group II people can come. Berkeley Group II people, of course, and anyone who belongs to the

Thursday Group of San Francisco is quite welcome. But it is a group of questions and no talk, talk, talk. Goodnight everybody! There are some photographs here of the barn in New York. I will leave them here; if you are interested, look at them. At least you can get an impression of the building and the inside. I will see some of you tomorrow.